**ED 604 Course Project: A Teacher Study**

Relevant Course Objectives:

5. Teacher candidates will identify and describe appropriate classroom learning environments that enhance the teaching-learning process.

CCCT: 2.1, 2.2, 2.4, 2.5, 4.1, 4.3; INTASC: 5; UNH: 7b

6. Teacher candidates will identify methods for the evaluation and assessment of learning and teaching.

CCCT: 3.4, 4.5, 4.6, 5.3, 5.4; INTASC: 8; UNH: 8b

7. Teacher candidates will demonstrate an understanding ofthe cyclical relationship among learning objectives, instruction, and assessment practices in the k-12 classroom.

CCCT: 3.1, 3.2; INTASC: 7; UNH: 7a, 8c

8. Teacher candidates will analyze classroom behaviors for the purpose of communicating academic and behavior performance expectations and results with students, their families, and other educators.

CCCT: 2.1, 2.4, 5.6; INTASC: 5; UNH: 5a, 5b, 9a

**Project Overview**

Please share this project information with your supervising administrator. After reviewing the assignment with you, if the administrator has any questions, s/he may contact me at: wiobyrne@newhaven.edu or 203-479-4272.

**Project Description:**

Teaching is both an art and a science. For several decades, educational researchers have studied the qualities of effective teaching. Teacher education programs such as this one focus on providing pre-service teachers with exposure to those qualities. Connecticut has used the research on effective teaching to identify six domains of teacher performance it expects teachers to develop (CCT Foundational Skills). In Connecticut, beginning teachers in their first few years of teaching are also required to engage with these qualities as part of the licensure process (via TEAM).

This project provides you with an initial opportunity to familiarize yourself with some of the foundational teaching skills domains identified in the CCT and to study the real work of teachers.

CCT Domains explored in the teacher study:

Domain 2: Classroom environment

Domain 3: Planning for active learning

Domain 4: Instruction for active learning

Domain 5: Assessment for learning

*See the 2010 Connecticut Common Core of Teaching: Foundational Skills for complete domain information.*

**Teacher Participation & Description:**

Select ONE teacher that you would like to engage with throughout this project—preferably a teacher whom has been identified as exemplary by building administrators or other teachers and is willing to assist you. If necessary, you may engage with multiple teachers if one teacher is not available to assist in completing the entire assignment. I suggest working with one teacher throughout the project but I understand that sometimes flexibility is necessary. See me privately if you have any concerns about your situation. I am happy to help when possible.

This project requires you to conduct multiple instructional observations of your selected teacher. Observations will be roughly 20-40 minutes in length, depending on the class. You will take notes during the observation that will allow you to address specific aspects of the project related to the teacher, students, and classroom. You will also engage in a series of short question-based conversations with your teacher regarding his/her work relative to the CCT domains. Questions may arise as a result of your observation, or may be independent of it. You will take brief notes during your conversation and write a detailed account afterward. Conversations may be between 5-20 minutes in length (estimated) and should take place at the convenience of the teacher (e.g., at lunch, on recess duty, or during a planning time).

UNH class time will be allotted to discuss observations and conversations, develop questions, and to share your experiences with classmates. Information shared with classmates and the instructor will be kept confidential; information will only be used to further the learning of pre-service teaching engaged in the UNH program.

**It is important for you, your administrator, and the selected teacher to know that UNH wants you to see good teaching in action and to have the opportunity to ask teachers questions about their practice. In the hustle-and-bustle of life in schools, this may not happen organically, and that is why we have developed this assignment. It is not meant to criticize the work being done in schools; rather, it is an opportunity for you to see how great teachers connect their professional knowledge with their classroom practice. We hope that this will help you develop the skills necessary to become a reflective practitioner yourself.**

This project will be separated into “bite size” components, with each section having its own due-date. In addition to these components, a final reflection that summarizes your learning from the project will be due at the end of the term (see weekly schedule for the exact dates).

**Part 1: Introduction**

Education does not happen in a vacuum, and yet it is often discussed and debated as though it does. The environment in which families live and students learn and teachers teach impacts what living and learning and teaching look like in that place. Similarly, the quality of teachers is often discussed in broad, sweeping terms, yet teachers have varying backgrounds that impact their personal teaching philosophy and the way they approach the teaching profession. Part 1 of the project is designed to help you explore the environmental context in which your school is located and to provide details about the teacher’s background. This contextual information will help you interpret your observations and interviews later on.

The main question you will answer through your introduction is: *What are the educational and social implications for the students at this school, given the context you’ve described?*

**Introduce your school.** Information you provide should paint a clear picture of the community and school in which your teacher works. Conversation starter questions to help you understand the learning context include:

* Where is the school located?
* What are the demographics of the student body?
* Are parents actively involved in the school (volunteering, PTA, etc.)?

*These questions are only a starting point; I expect you to add to this list and provide a comprehensive description of the school.*

**Introduce your teacher.** Information you provide should help me understand the teachers’ background and why you have chosen to engage with this teacher for this project. Conversation starter questions include:

* When/where did the teacher obtain his/her teacher training?
* How long has the teacher been teaching in this district/school/grade-level/subject-matter?
* In addition to teaching, what other roles does the teacher have in the school?

*These questions are only a starting point; I expect you to add to this list and include information that provides an initial understanding of the person as an educator.*

The introduction should be roughly 4-5 pages in length, typed, double-spaced, and fluently and professionally written. It should be free of grammatical and spelling errors.

**Part 2: A great place to learn**

What makes a classroom a great place to learn? That is the question Part 2 of the teacher study attempts to examine. For this part of the project you will review the CCT Foundational Skills for developing a positive *classroom environment*, interview your participating teacher regarding their classroom environment, and conduct an observation focused on environmental factors that impact learning. Collectively, this information should give you some insight about what makes a classroom a great place to learn, and importantly, why.

The written description of Part 2 will include the following:

1. An overview of CCT Domain 2 and the research that supports it. (Demonstrate that you understand the purpose of the domain and the research on which it is based.)
2. A description of your conversation with the teacher, and how that informs your observation. (Attach conversation starter questions)
3. An objective summary of your classroom observation. (i.e., what you saw; attach observation notes)
4. What you thought about the observation—areas where you thought the teacher demonstrated strengths, where you could see a link between your conversation and classroom practice/behaviors, or where there were discrepancies between thought and action.
5. A description of the insights you have gained through your study of the domain and the teacher you have selected to work with.

Your written summary should be 5-7 pages in length, typed, double-spaced, and fluently and professionally written. It should be free of grammatical and spelling errors.

**Part 3: Planning and teaching for active learning**

Part 3 of the teacher study requires you to look at the relationship between the CCT Domains 3 and 4—planning for active learning and teaching for active learning. The surest way to have a successful class is to plan for it. Beginning teachers often make the mistake of planning too broadly or too narrowly, which can result in not being sufficiently prepared during actual instruction. Here, you have the opportunity to explore how your selected teacher plans for instruction, prepares for instruction, and implements those plans.

The written description of Part 3 will include the following:

1. An overview of CCT Domains 3 and 4, and the research that supports them. (Demonstrate that you understand the purpose of the domains and the research on which they are based.)
2. A description of your conversation with the teacher regarding planning for instruction and teaching, and how that informs your observation. (Attach conversation starter questions)
3. An objective summary of your classroom observation. (i.e., what you saw; attach observation notes)
4. What you thought about the observation, including where you could see a connection between your conversation and classroom practice/behaviors, or where there were discrepancies between thought and action.
5. A description of the insights you have gained through your study of the domains and the teacher you have selected to work with.

Your written summary should be 5-7 pages in length, typed, double-spaced, and fluently and professionally written. It should be free of grammatical and spelling errors.

**Part 4: Assessment for learning**

For Part 4 of the assignment you will follow the directions and rubric for the “Evaluating Student Work Assignment.” You should try to include elements of CCT Domain 5 in your response. You may use the description below to help you think about your response.

As a student yourself, you’ve been an “apprentice of observation” (Lortie, 1975) for much of your life. Your roughly 13,000 hours of classroom time (before college) has given you some insight. But the process of student assessment takes place mostly behind a curtain; critically important but mostly unobserved by students. As such, pre-service teachers often feel overwhelmed when they are asked to engage with assessment-related content—it is a novel construct for which you have a limited schema. Now, more than ever before, teachers are being asked to use assessments as a way to gauge past teaching success, future instructional practice, and differentiated/universal exploration of content. Some assessments are being used to rank teachers and schools, to determine merit pay, and to determine instructional effectiveness. Regardless of the use or how you feel about them, implementation of and decision-making based on student assessments will be a part of your life as a teacher. Here, you have the opportunity to learn more about the practice of assessment, explore how your selected teacher frames his/her thinking about assessment and how s/he uses assessment to improve students’ learning.

The written description of Part 4 will include the following:

1. An overview of CCT Domain 5 and the research that supports it. (Demonstrate that you understand the purpose of the domain and the research on which it is based.)
2. A description of your conversation with the teacher, and how that informs your observation. (Attach conversation starter questions)
3. An objective summary of your classroom observation. (i.e., what you saw; attach observation notes)
4. What you thought about the observation—areas where you thought the teacher demonstrated strengths, where you could see a link between your conversation and classroom practice/behaviors, or where there were discrepancies between thought and action.
5. A description of the insights you have gained through your study of the domain and the teacher you have selected to work with.

Your written summary should be 5-7 pages in length, typed, double-spaced, and fluently and professionally written. It should be free of grammatical and spelling errors.

**Part 5: Culmination**

In culmination, you should submit your revisions to parts 1-4 of the project. You will also include the summary of an additional, final conversation where you may ask additional questions that may be outside of the strict purview of the CCT domains we explored (attach the questions).

You will also summarize what you learned from engaging in this project. In ED 601 you wrote a piece asking you to examine your past and present beliefs about education. Similarly, I encourage you to reflect on the prompt, “I used to think….and now I think….,” regarding the practice of teaching. Additional insights that resulted from and suggestions for changes to this project are also encouraged in the reflection.

This final summary should be 5-7 pages in length, typed, double-spaced, and fluently and professionally written. It should be free of grammatical and spelling errors.